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## CONDITIONS AT BUENA VISTA LAKE

During the early part of September, Deputy Tipton Mathews of Wasco, California, visited Buena Vista Lake, in southwestern Kern County. At that time, ducks were dying very rapidly. Deputy Mathews, in walking from the shallower portions of the lake along a slough on the northeastern side, counted over 1500 dead ducks in less than one mile. In some places the dead almost touched one another. On October 9 the writer visited this spot. Few birds were then dying there, but the great mass of carcasses was simply appalling. The ac-

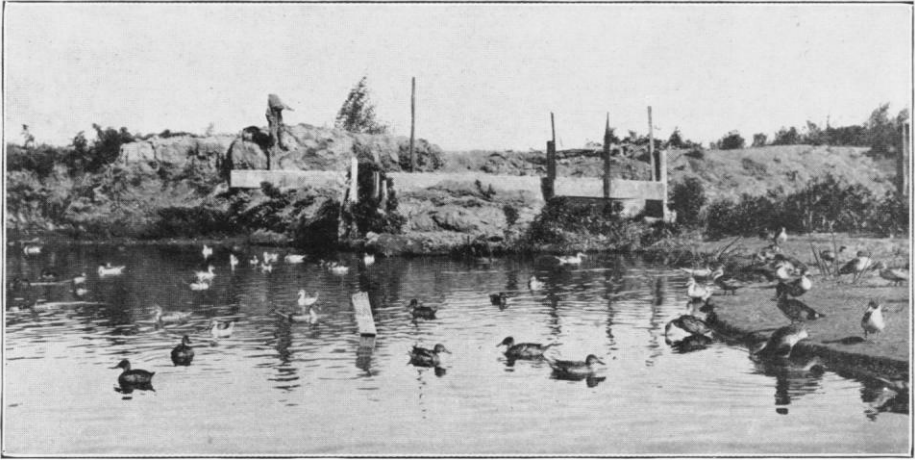


Fig. 77. SICK DUCKS REMOVED FROM BUENA VISTA LAKE AND PLACED ON FRESH WATER SOON RECUPERATED. THESE BIRDS WERE ENCLOSED BY PERPENDICULAR BANKS AND WIRE FENCING, THE FLIGHT FEATHERS OF ONE WING BEING CLIPPED TO PREVENT THE BIRDS FROM FLYING AWAY AS SOON AS WELL; PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN OCTOBER 9, 1913.

companying photograph (fig. 76) does not nearly do justice to the situation. Ducks constituted the main portion of the remains; still, many cormorants, pelicans, etc., were represented. A number of sick birds were obtained and examined. Postmortem showed conditions similar to those of the Tulare Lake ducks. Samples of the water of Buena Vista are being analyzed.

It is hoped that by further experimentation the specific factor of the malady may be brought to light, and that it may prove expedient to effect means by which this great loss of birds may be greatly reduced, or even prevented.

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Two Stragglers on the Oregon Coast.**—*Plectrophenax nivalis nivalis*. Snow Bunting. On December 31, 1912, Mr. O. J. Murie collected one of these birds on the ocean beach at Netarts, Oregon. It was alone and no others were seen during ten days hunting in this vicinity.

*Salpinctes obsoletus obsoletus*. Rock Wren. On December 27, 1912, Mr. Murie collected a Rock Wren where it was running about over the drift-wood on the beach at Netarts. This is the first record, to my knowledge, of this wren occurring on the coast of Oregon, and the record in midwinter makes it doubly interesting.

Mr. Murie has kindly allowed me to publish these notes.—STANLEY G. JEWETT, *Portland, Oregon*.

**Nesting of the Band-tailed Pigeon.**—On August 11, 1913, while on a fishing trip to Bear Creek, the stream that empties out of Big Bear Lake in the San Bernardino Mountains, I accidentally discovered a nest of the Band-tailed Pigeon (*Columba fasciata fasciata*). The bird was flushed from the nest which was found to contain one nearly fresh egg. I waited for some time but the bird did not return to her nest. The nest was situated about ten feet up in a small oak tree, growing among pines on a very rugged mountain side at probably 5,000 feet altitude. The nest was a very flimsy affair, similar to the nest of the Mourning Dove but a trifle larger, and was composed of dry oak twigs. As this date of nesting seemed to me to be unusual I thought it of especial interest. The egg was collected and is now in my possession.

On this trip I only noted two other individuals of this species, one near the mouth of the Santa Ana Canyon and the other at the In-take in the same canyon.

During the summer of 1912 these birds were very common at Glenn Ranch Resort, Lytle Creek Canyon, San Gabriel Mountains, elevation about 3,500 feet. They were most common during August and the early part of September and were found feeding on the elder and coffee berries. This summer the birds were there only in limited numbers, although the feed was apparently more plentiful than in 1912.—WRIGHT M. PIERCE, *Claremont, California*.

**Late Nesting of Certain Birds in Arizona.**—I believe we collectors of eggs are inclined to stop active field work too early in the season, and thereby we miss a good many interesting and valuable finds. Last year I noted in the columns of THE CONDOR several late nestings and have several more to report for the season of 1913. My work this year has kept me in the Huachuca Mountains since the middle of July and I have made the following "finds":

Mearns Quail (*Cyrtonyx montezumae mearnsi*) were found nesting regularly during August. Several nests were shown to me by Mexicans. Fresh eggs were found as late as August 22, when I collected a set of eleven. Newly hatched young were found August 17, when a nest was visited which the preceding day held thirteen eggs. About 8:30 A. M. on the 17th we made a very careful approach and were rewarded by a beautiful sight. The male sat in the entrance of the nest with his head ducked down, while from between one wing and his back a little striped head protruded. Stooping I looked into the nest and there sat the female with one small chick on her back and a row of them poking their heads out all around her. This picture lasted but a moment for both parents fluttered away and the young crawled off into the grass and among the rocks. They were too small to walk, but crawled along with their chins on the ground. In a few moments they were well hidden and the nest held but the remains of thirteen broken egg shells. The last nest with eggs was found September 5 and held seven eggs on the point of hatching.

Another species nesting regularly during August was the Scott Sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps scotti*). The last set was taken August 15 and the eggs were nearly fresh. A set of three Arizona Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus nelsoni*) was taken July 29. Incubation had proceeded about one-half. On September 2 a set of seventeen Scaled Quail (*Callipepla squamata*) was brought to me with eggs in varying stages of incubation, from about fresh up to some far advanced. As these were laid during a rainy period I am inclined to think that the bird began to sit as soon as the first few eggs were laid, which would account for the great variation in incubation.

On August 25 I noted a family of three Arizona Jays (*Aphelocoma sieberi arizonae*) as yet unable to fly. April is the regular month for the nesting of this species. On July 4, while looking for Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers' nests, I found a set of four almost fresh eggs of the Ant-eating Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus formicivorus*). Other nests of this species held young large enough to fly, or had already been deserted by the young. On August 11, I collected a set of three eggs of the Canyon Towhee (*Pipilo fuscus mesoleucus*) with incubation well begun. I have taken this species as late as October, however.

The late nesting of the Mearns Quail and Scott Sparrow may be accounted for by the fact that our rainy season begins about July 10, and the weed and grass seeds become more plentiful thereafter. Mearns Quail shot in September had pieces of acorn kernels in their crops. The late nests of the other species must be considered as individual eccentricities.—FRANK C. WILLARD, *Tombstone, Arizona*.

**The Sabine Gull in the Santa Barbara Channel.**—On August 11, 1912, I saw a flock of eight or ten Sabine Gulls (*Xema sabini*) in the Santa Barbara Channel, about ten miles from Santa Cruz Island. On August 1, 1913, I saw another flock between Santa Cruz Island and Santa Barbara; and again on August 4 and 7 a flock was sighted. On the last

date the birds were seen about five miles from Santa Barbara. This would indicate that this species is quite a common late summer transient through these waters.—HOWARD W. WRIGHT, *Stanford University, California*.

**Nesting Notes from San Diego County.**—On March 27, 1913, a pair of Pacific Horned Owls were found nesting about two miles down the Sweetwater River from Dehesa and upon rapping upon the tree the female was flushed. The three young were rather large and partly feathered. As the old bird left the nest a pair of Red-bellied Hawks set out in pursuit. One continued to chase the old owl, while the other hawk returned and robbed the nest of one of the young owls. This was torn to pieces and eaten in a nearby tree. The day before I had robbed the Red-bellied Hawk's nest of three eggs. This was located about a quarter of a mile up the river. On returning to the locality a week later there was only one young owl left.

On July 21, 1913, at Lemon Grove, while picking some fruit in a nearby orchard, I was surprised to hear the "purt, purt" of an Arizona Hooded Oriole in an adjoining palm tree. I was still more surprised on finding a partially completed nest swung to the underside of a lower leaf of the same palm. July 30 the nest contained one egg, with the female sitting. On August 4 I took the nest and 3 eggs, the latter varying considerably in incubation. This is the best marked set I have ever seen.

August 7, 1913, at Lemon Grove, a neighbor called my attention to a nest of Western Mockingbird not over twelve feet from his kitchen door and right over the sidewalk. It was in a cypress tree ten feet above the ground and contained four fresh eggs which I took. This was the fourth laying of this year known to me. The first, of four eggs too far advanced to blow, was handed to me by the same man April 9. It was taken from an ornamental pine tree near the front door. The middle of May I saw the old birds feeding young, and again the second week in July I saw them feeding young; but I think a pet cat caught this brood.—LAURENCE M. HUEY, *San Diego, California*.

**Dry Season Notes.**—In this year of unusual drought the fish-eating birds are having a lean time of it in the interior and are often hard pushed to make a living. Wild ducks are to be seen frequenting shallow, alkaline ponds that they would turn up their noses at in ordinary years, and dabbling in the foul mud for what insect life there may be there. Farallon Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus albociliatus*) and White Pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) cruise about in a restless manner, endeavoring to "fill up their beak with food for a week" in the most unpromising places; while the herons scatter far and wide in hopes of picking up a stray minnow or frog here and there.

Ordinarily our rivers overflow their lower banks in the spring time, and the carp, minnows, etc., spread out into the submerged lowlands to spawn. The result of this is that as the waters recede in summertime the young fish collect in the small sloughs and depressions. The areas of the water surfaces shrink from day to day until finally there are left only small, evil-smelling pools so shallow that one can see the backs of the small fry sticking above the surface. The fishes are so numerous that they may be said to actually swarm. During this period the heron families grow fat in such spots, with no exertion whatever! But this year there has been no overflow, and those fish that spawned did so only in deep water; so the poor herons have to get out and "hustle" for a living, taking a chance at catching a few stray fish that are foolish enough to come into the shallow water near the banks of the rivers.

I was much astonished a few days ago, on September 19, 1913, to be exact, to see three California Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus californicus*) come sailing over our house and light on the lake a few yards away. This is the first time I have ever seen this species in the interior, as it seems to stick to the seacoast almost exclusively. The birds were so near that there was no possible chance of making a mistake as to their identity.

Where the water-loving species of blackbirds nested this year I do not know, but certainly they have not been with us in their usual numbers, doubtless because there were no tule ponds or overflow lands for them to nest in. The Bicolored Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus californicus*) did breed to some extent in the dry weeds and small willows, but were not at all numerous at nesting time.—JOSEPH MAILLIARD, *Rancho Dos Rios, Stanislaus County, California*.

**Note on the Guadalupe Caracara.**—During the past summer Captain Charles E. Davis, of Los Angeles, has made several trips to Guadalupe Island, off the coast of Lower California, for the purpose of taking moving pictures of the sea elephants found around the island, and also to capture alive some of the younger animals. In a conversation with the

writer he made a statement which seems of sufficient interest to repeat. Hearing that the island had been visited by two men who had killed several of the sea elephants, which he had been at some pains to protect, he at once hastened to the spot to ascertain the amount of the damage. On landing on the beach where the killing had been done, he found the place reeking with the decomposed remains of five or six of the animals. He had already remarked to me upon the noticeable scarcity of birds along the shore of the island, as compared with the abundance of water birds elsewhere, but he further stated that as he landed several gulls flew up from the carrion, and with them two or three dark-colored birds, which he described as apparently crosses between an eagle and a turkey buzzard. This remark, coming from a man ignorant of a caracara, without prompting from myself, and not dwelt upon by him afterward, is at least suggestive of the possible persistence up to the present time of the supposedly extinct Guadalupe Caracara (*Polyborus lutosus*).—H. S. SWARTH, *Museum of History, Science and Art, Los Angeles, California*.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk Nesting in Arizona.**—On May 30, 1907, I collected a set of four eggs of the Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter velox*) from a nest in a small fir tree in Miller Canyon, Huachuca Mountains, Arizona, at an altitude of about 6,800 feet. Incubation was begun. The female sat very close and hung around close by while I collected the egg.—FRANK C. WILLARD, *Tombstone, Arizona*.

**Note on the Ashy Petrel.**—On August 3, 1913, I visited the Painted Cave on Santa Cruz Island and made a thorough search for the "nests" of the Ashy Petrel (*Oceanodroma homochroa*). I could find nothing but a few egg shells, which would indicate that the birds either bred earlier, or else did not breed there at all this season.—HOWARD W. WRIGHT, *Stanford University, California*.

**Three New Birds from Eastern Oregon.**—In working over a collection of bird skins from Harney County, Oregon, collected by Mr. Wm. L. Finley during the summer of 1908, I found specimens of the following birds which I believe have never been put on record as occurring in this State. The identifications were made by Mr. Joseph Grinnell and Mr. H. C. Oberholser.

*Empidonax griseus*. Gray Flycatcher. Two adult specimens in worn summer plumage taken in the open sagebrush country near Wright's Point, about fifteen miles south of Burns, on June 25, 1908.

*Amphispiza bilineata deserticola*. Desert Sparrow. Two adult males taken at Wright's Point on June 24 and 25, 1908.

*Hylocichla fuscescens salicicola*. Willow Thrush. One adult male taken in the willows along Silvie's River near Burns on June 24, 1908.—STANLEY G. JEWETT, *Portland, Oregon*.

**Spotted Owls in San Diego County.**—On June 22, 1910, while hunting on Palomar Mountain, San Diego County, California, a strange object was seen moving in an oak tree about sixty feet above the ground. On closer observation its identity became more uncertain; although I whistled several times it did not move. I finally decided to shoot and was astonished at the downfall of a dried gray-squirrel carcass. The animal had evidently been killed or had died lying crossways on a large limb. Its tail waving in the wind was the feature which had attracted me.

At the same moment of the gun's explosion a large bird was seen to flop on the next limb directly above where the squirrel's dried carcass had hung. Not being able to recognize the bird I decided to watch, and after a few minutes an owl was seen to cautiously peep over the edge of the limb. It eyed me first with one black eye and then the other. I shot it, and on picking up the specimen was surprised to identify a full-plumaged Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*).

The following year, 1911, on the same date, June 22, and in the same locality, a party of us had planned to go to a nearby hillside where tiger lilies were known to grow, and, being rather on the lookout for specimens, I took my gun. All of us were busily engaged in digging the bulbs of the lilies, when a sudden "ow-w-w-ow" brought me to my feet, gun in hand, and after cautiously peering in all the surrounding trees a Spotted Owl was seen perched near the top and very close to the trunk of a small cedar tree about forty feet high. Not wishing to shoot the bird to pieces my aim was made a little to the side. The shot dropped a wounded bird and while I was occupied in extinguishing its life a clamorous call from a member of the party proclaimed the location of a second owl. I quickly dropped the first bird, grabbed the gun and soon had two owls to my credit. The last one was also perched near the trunk and very close to the top of a small fir tree about 60 feet high.

These birds were in moult, one having a single tail feather, and the other none at all; they were a pair and probably had raised a brood early in the spring. Further examination made positive that this spot had been their roosting place for some time past. The stomachs of these birds were entirely empty, giving no evidence of what their food might have been in this locality.—LAURENCE M. HUEY, *San Diego, California*.